

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,

Considered in Two

DISCOURSES

Preached before the

Univerſity of OXFORD,

MARCH 20, 1757;

In the Morning at *St. MARY's*,

AND

In the Afternoon at *St. PETER's*.

By WILLIAM ROMAINÉ, M. A.
Lecturer of St. Dunſtan's in the Weſt, London.

*Their Righteouſneſs is of me, ſaith the
Lord, Iſaiah liv. 17.*



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Rector of St. Dunstons in the West, London.

Printed by J. H. B. at the Sign of the
Three Kings in St. Dunstons Church.



L O N D O N

Printed for J. WOODMAN, at the Sign of the Three Kings in St. Dunstons Church, at the Sign of the Three Kings in St. Dunstons Church, at the Sign of the Three Kings in St. Dunstons Church.

[Price One Shilling]

TO THE
Rev^d. Dr. **RANDOLPH**,
VICE-CHANCELLOR
OF THE
University of **OXFORD**,
AND
PRESIDENT of *Corpus Christi*
College.

WHEN I delivered these discourses, I had no design to make them public; but I have been since compelled to it. I understand they gave great offence, especially to you, and I was in consequence thereof refused the university pulpit. In justice, not to myself, for I desire to be out of the question, but to the great doctrine here treated of, namely, the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as the only ground of our acceptance and justification before God

DEDICATION.

~~the father, I have sent to the press~~
what was delivered from the pulpit.
I leave the friends of our church to
~~judge, whether there be any thing~~
herein advanced contrary to scrip-
ture, and to the doctrines of the
reformation. If not, I am safe. If
~~there be, you are bound to make it~~
appear. You have a good Pen, and
you have great leisure. Make use of
them; and I hope and pray you may
use them for your good and mine.

I am, with my constant and hearty
prayers for the university's prosperity,

Mr. Vice-Chancellor,

Your Humble Servant in Christ,

William Romaine.



against spiritual things. He tells spiritual things
as it were before our eyes, under the images
which he created

ISAIAH xlv. 8.

*Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righte-
ousness; let the earth open, and let
them bring forth salvation, and let
righteousness spring up together. I
the Lord have created it.*



WHILE man is in the body, he must receive his instruction from the bodily senses. He cannot of himself form an idea of any thing spiritual, but as it is compared to, and illustrated by, some material object. And this method of instruction God has followed in the scripture, both in the language, and in the composition. The language is entirely suited to man in his present state, every *Hebrew* word signifying first some material object, and thereby conveying the idea of some correspondent spiritual object. And the scripture-composition abounds with images and illustrations of divine things taken from nature. The evangelical prophet is a remarkable instance of this kind of writing. He represents

represents the various parts of the kingdom of grace under their expressive and familiar pictures in nature. He sets spiritual things as it were before our eyes, under the images which God had established in his created works, in order to bring them down to our understandings. And every illustration of this kind, being God's own application of natural things, must be considered as infallible truth. The spiritual application is as certain as the outward fact from which it is taken. God would not use the book of nature to illustrate the book of grace, unless the illustration was just and instructive: for it is not consistent with his perfections to propose to his creatures for truth, what would deceive, or to reveal, what did not tend to edify them.

In this light let us consider the beautiful image in the text. God is here recommending to us the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. He proposes it in clear and plain terms; and to convince our understandings, and to win our affections, he sets it before our eyes under a very affecting picture. He represents the doctrine under one of the most common and familiar occurrences in nature. Thither he sends us for instruction in righteousness — And may the spirit of the Lord enable every one of you to apply the instruction for the good of your souls, while I am

First,

First, Opening the true sense and meaning of the words. And then,

Secondly, Making some practical remarks upon them.

And *First*, The words are a scripture-image and application of a well-known fact in nature. The earth is supposed to be deprived of the rain of heaven. It has no refreshing showers, no enlivening dew to saturate the thirsty soil; and for want of their fruitful influence the earth is entirely barren. It produces nothing either for use or ornament. While it was laying in this state, God gave the word and the clouds descended, and the earth opened to receive the fruitful drops of rain, which they poured down, and by their prolific virtue such effects followed, as the Psalmist has beautifully described in these words, "He watereth the hills from above, whereby the earth is filled with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The high trees are satisfied, even the cedars of *Libanus*, which he hath planted." These are the certain consequences of warm and gentle showers. When they

they are animated with the light of the sun in this spring season of the year, they never fail to bring forth the rich products of the earth, from the lowest herb to the highest cedar on *Libanus*. Under this plain and familiar image God intends to teach us the most important truth of christianity. Because it is the most necessary to be believed, he has therefore made it the most easy to be understood. The principal point of view in which he would have us to consider the image in the text is this. The earth without rain lays barren and desolate, the rain descends from heaven, and is dropped down from the clouds, and when it comes in plentiful showers, and there is clear shining after it, then it always produces fruitfulness. Thus the Holy Spirit sends us for instruction in righteousness — Righteousness is to the soul what the rain and dew are to the thirsty ground. The heavens were to drop this righteousness from above, and the skies were to pour it down, while man's heart being opened thankfully receives the heavenly gift. He has no hand, no merit in procuring the gift, but has only to accept it, as the dry parched ground does the enlivening drops of rain, which change its withered barren face into pleasing verdure and rich fruitfulness. In order to understand clearly what the all-wise spirit would teach us under this sweet image, we should have a perfect idea of the

word

word righteousness, upon which the whole stress of the passage turns. In the *Old Testament* it is a mercantile term, taken from the method of trading in the early ages of the world, when business was carried on, and money paid and received by weight. The fair trader kept an even ballance in paying and receiving, therefore he was a just or righteous man. And hence justice, which is the emblem of this fair trading, is always painted with an even ballance in her hand. When the scripture speaks of human affairs, this is always the sense of the word *righteousness*; for thus it is used *Lev. xix. 36*. "Just ballances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have." The same word is here four times rendered just, which in the text is rendered righteousness. And in like manner in *Deut. xxv. 14, 15*. the command runs, "Thou shalt not have in thine house diverse measures, a great and a small, but thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have." So again *Ezek. xlv. 9, 10*. "Take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God. Ye shall have just ballances, and a just ephah, and a just bath." In these passages, not to mention any more, the same word, which is translated righteousness in the text, is undoubtedly applied to the evenness of the ballance, and to strict justice in weights and measures. When

B

the scripture speaks of dealings between man and man, this is the established sense of the word; and if we spiritualize this sense we shall understand the usage of the word in religious affairs. All that we are, and all that we hope for is God's free gift, and therefore as the Lord and giver of all he has an unalienable right to our continual service. And he demanded it. He gave us an holy and good law, to which he requires the perfect uninterrupted obedience of every faculty of soul and body. If man had paid it him in thought, word and deed, then he would have been just — he would have dealt uprightly with God, and the divine law and justice would have had no demands upon him. But if we pay it not, then we are unjust; and the law for the first offence pronounces it curses upon us: for it is written, "Curse is every one who continueth not in all things, that are written in the book of the law." If we continue not in all things, if we fail but in one point, then we rob God of his due. We become his debtors, and law and justice may seize upon us, and cast us into prison, until the uttermost farthing be paid, which it is impossible we should ever pay, because the obedience of millions of years could make no satisfaction for one single transgression against the infinitely perfect law of God. One transgression having infinite demerit in it, would weigh down the scale infinitely, and therefore eternally; unless

less some infinitely perfect obedience, which no finite creature can pay, be put into the opposite scale.

Upon this state of the case it appears, that righteousness signifies the most strict and unerring justice in our dealings with God. The law of God, which is his revealed will, and the rule of our obedience, is holy as God is holy, yea perfectly, infinitely holy. It cannot behold the least iniquity, any more than God can behold it, and therefore it cuts the sinner off from all right and title to legal righteousness for the very first offence, puts him under the curse, and subjects him to all its pains and penalties: And upon whom the law pronounces its curses, God the righteous judge will pour down the vials of his wrath. Upon the unrighteous he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, this shall be their portion to drink for ever and ever.

Are you then, my brethren, in the number of the righteous, or of the unrighteous? Is it not of infinite consequence to know what state you are in? for certainly if it should appear, that you are unrighteous, you would not act so contrary to your own interest, as to choose to be subject to the curses of God's holy law, and to suffer the threatened punishment, if there be a way left to escape: Do you see then, how necessary it is we should enquire, whether we
have

have acted righteously with God or not. To the infallible word therefore, and to the testimony let us repair. The oracles of truth inform us, that after God had finished his six days work, he looked down from heaven and behold all things were good. There was no disorder in the natural world, and no evil in the spiritual world. But he is soon after represented looking down from heaven upon the children of men, and behold all things were evil. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (*Gen. vi. 5.*) Whence was the origin of this universal evil? Mankind had gone out of the way of righteousness, they had broken the law, and had made themselves altogether corrupt, and were become abominable, there was none of them righteous, no not one. What! Not one righteous man left upon earth? No. — God declares by the mouth of his holy prophet, that there was not one. They had all sinned and come short of the glory of God. They were by nature children of his wrath, through one man's disobedience; and they were ten times more the children of wrath by actual guilt, and being sinners against God's law, both by nature and by life, he hath shut them all up under sin, in a state of condemnation, reserving them to the judgment of the great day.

This

This is our condition. We are all unrighteous: And we are without strength to attain any righteousness of our own: Because we are poor broken debtors, who have nothing to pay. One offence attaints our blood, and renders us incapable of doing any act, that will be deemed good and valid in the court of heaven, for this irreverfible decree ftands againft us in the divine records — *The unrighteous fhall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

From hence arifes a question, the moft important and interefting that can engage a finner's attention, concerning which every perfon concerned about his eternal welfare, will reafon in this manner, “ I acknowledge the
 “ law of God, to be holy and good, but I
 “ have broken it, and have robbed God of
 “ his glory and the law of its honour. I am
 “ unrighteous. As fuch, heaven is fhut
 “ againft me. And will be fhut for ever,
 “ unlefs I can be made righteous. But how
 “ or by what means can this be done?
 “ God's law is immutable. His truth that
 “ threatened to punifh transgreffion is in-
 “ flexible. His juftice is infinite, and muft
 “ have fatisfaction for the broken law —
 “ yea, full and perfect fatisfaction, fuitable
 “ to the infinite purity and holinefs of the
 “ divine nature. But alafs! what fatisfac-
 “ tion can I make it? Nay, what fatisfac-
 “ tion could all the holy angels and the
 “ higheft

" highest order of beings, if they would lay
 " down their lives for me, make to that
 " justice, which is infinite, and to which I
 " am an infinite debtor. Nothing can save
 " me, but some divine and infinite righte-
 " ousness wrought out for me and in my
 " stead, and God alone can work out such
 " a righteousness, but how can I hope that
 " he will, since he is the very person, whom
 " I have offended by my sin.

In this manner every person concerned a-
 bout eternity would reason. When he is
 convinced of his own unrighteousness, he will
 look out for some means to be made righteous,
 and he will soon find that there are no hu-
 man means. Righteousness grows not upon
 this earth. It fled to heaven, when all the
 world was brought in guilty before God.
 And it cannot return to earth, until all the
 offended attributes of God be satisfied. But
 what created being can make a satisfaction
 equal to the offence? All hope humanly
 speaking is cut off: for no finite creature can
 do an infinite action. Oh! what glad tidings
 then does the prophet here bring to a guilty
 world. He sees the heavens from above
 dropping down righteousness, and the earth
 opening and receiving it. The blessing is so
 unmerited, so inestimable, that one would
 be tempted to ask — How God could be so
 gracious? How can he exercise such mercy
 consistent with his other perfections? How
 can

can he suffer the guilty to be accounted righteous, until the demands of law and justice be fully satisfied? But where is the satisfaction equal to their infinite demands? and until such a satisfaction be paid, how can his all-pure holiness look upon the impure sinner, or how can his inflexible truth, which threatened punishment, remit it? Glory be to his free grace, which hath found out a righteousness for us, against which law and justice cannot make the least exception, and which hath preserved the glory of all his attributes inviolate, and that is the righteousness of the God-man Christ Jesus.

We are taught by the christian verity, that in the divine essence there are three persons of equal glory and majesty, none is before or after other, none is greater or less than another. Between these divine persons the covenant of grace was ordered in all things and sure; and from this covenant the co-equal and co-eternal three took the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Son* is a name of office, descriptive of the wonderful humiliation of the Messiah, who took our nature, and was made a son for our salvation — God and man being united in one Christ, as much as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man. The God-man undertakes in our nature to pay perfect satisfaction to his father's justice. Accordingly he paid the law an infinitely perfect obedience. And he thereby magnified it, and
made

made it more honourable, than the obedience of all created beings could have done. Then he suffered what was due to our breach of the law, and paid the death which we deserved. And justice demonstrated, that it had no more demands upon him, when it released him from the prison of the grave. And by this obedience and these sufferings he wrought out an infinitely perfect righteousness, which being imputed to the unrighteous, and laid hold of by the hand of faith, renders them perfectly righteous at the bar of justice.

This is the righteousness of God to which every sinner must submit, if he be ever discharged from condemnation. He must receive it from God, as his free gift — without the least merit or deserving. And he must trust wholly to it, never presuming to add any thing of his own to it, as a condition of justification. These are hard lessons to the pride of our corrupt hearts. Indeed it is the hardest lesson of grace to humble us so far, that we can give up the merit of all our fancied good works, and take the righteousness of God as a free gift. As if God's righteousness was not perfect enough, we are always thinking to add something of our own to it. Our fallen nature is ever tempting us to this absurdity, and the Holy Spirit has not offered us a more forcible argument throughout the scripture, than the striking
image

image in the text. Our guilty souls are compared to the dry withered ground, which has been long deprived of the fruitful rain and dew of heaven. When they were laying parched and burnt up with drought, it pleased God to command the heavens to distil the refreshing drops of dew, and the clouds to pour down their genial and enlivening showers, which the earth opening its mouth thankfully received. Now the righteousness of Christ is bestowed, as these sweet influences of heaven are, freely. — The earth has no hand, no merit, in bringing down the dew or the rain, nor have we any in bringing down the righteousness of Christ. And the fruits, which the rain and dew enable the earth to bring forth, are produced by their prolific virtue animated with the genial warmth of the sun: for the earth is entirely passive and inactive, and only acts as it is acted upon. In like manner every good gift and grace is from above; they are the fruits of righteousness, which could never have grown in our barren hearts, unless Christ had sent his spirit from on high to plant and to water them with the continual dew of his blessing. When he with-holds his influence, they immediately wither and die. When he rains and shines upon them, then they flourish. This is the beautiful illustration in the text. Let the heavens drop down the righteousness

of Christ from above, like the dew, and let the skies pour it down, like fruitful showers upon a thirsty ground — “Let the earth open, let man open his heart, and then they shall bring forth salvation;” *they* is the righteousness which is from above, poured down upon and received into man’s heart, shall therein take root, and shall enable it to bring forth fruit abundantly, even present and eternal salvation. Salvation is not of man. It belongeth unto the Lord. It is one of the infinitely perfect works of God; for, there is no saviour besides him — none that can deliver man from the enemies of his peace, but the same almighty being, who created the heavens and the earth, and who still supports them by the word of his power. And when he, by whom all things were made, for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin *Mary*, and was made man, then his name was called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins. Salvation on his part was finished, when having fully satisfied the demands of law and justice by his obedience and sufferings, and thereby wrought out an all-perfect righteousness for us, he ascended with great glory to his kingdom in heaven. But he did not leave us comfortless. The Holy Ghost the comforter has now the conducting of the work of salvation. And when

when he humbles the sinner under a sense of his unrighteousness by nature and life, and enables him to wait at the throne of grace for a free pardon, when God the Father accepts him through the merits of his Son, and justifies him, then it is the office of the Holy Spirit to bear his testimony with the sinner's spirit that he is a child of God. With the act of justification thus evidenced and applied he receives justifying faith, and is brought into a state of salvation: for the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. There is no salvation without righteousness, and it is of the Lord's free grace that he is received as righteous, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by faith. Christ's righteousness can be made ours only by imputation. As our sins were actually imputed to him, so his righteousness is actually imputed to us. The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and therefore he was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities. As he thus took our sins upon himself, so we by faith take his righteousness upon us, and by it are saved.

And when the heavens have dropt down righteousness, and the barren heart of sinful man has opened and received it, and with it salvation, then together with salvation, the prophet says, "righteousness shall spring up together." Until righteousness and salvation

be in the soul, nothing good springs up: It produces no good works, any more than the earth brings forth fruit without the rain and dew of heaven, but when righteousness comes from above it manifests itself by its effects, as rain does. It does not remain in the man, as an inactive barren principle, but it is mighty in operation to enable him to bring forth fruit. As soon as it is poured down from on high, and received into the heart, it takes root and springs up with every fair blossom, and produces all the ripe fruits of holiness. He that before was dead to God, and to the things of God, having received justification to life, hereby glorifies his heavenly father, that he bears much fruit. Righteousness changes him, as much as rain does the dry barren ground. As it makes the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice, and to blossom like the rose, to blossom abundantly, and to rejoice even with joy and singing, so does righteousness act in the barren wilderness of the sinner's heart, bringing with it the reviving streams of grace, and causing every sweet and holy temper to spring up. The grace, which flows from righteousness, renews and sanctifies the heart, makes it dead to sin, and alive unto God. This grace enables us to put off the old man of sin with his corrupt deeds, and to put on the new man, which
 ed after

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This new man is created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and he produces them daily more in number, and of a richer kind — watered with the fruitful dew of heaven; they are continually springing up and growing to the glory of God, and to the good of men, and they are continually administering that comfort to the justified soul, which the prophet has described in these sweet expressions — “The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (*Isaiab xxxii. 17.*) If any man has peace with God it must arise from righteousness, from being justified by faith, and if any man has quietness and assurance for ever, it must be the effect of that righteousness, which God has created. It must not arise from going about to establish our own righteousness, but from submitting ourselves to the righteousness of God, of which he says in the last words of the text, *I the Lord have created it.* I Jehovah, who created all things, have created this righteousness for the unrighteous and the ungodly. It is a new creation. And to create is my incommunicable attribute. You may as soon create a world out of nothing, as create that righteousness, with which sinners must be clothed, if ever they stand before me with-

without spot of sin into salvation. No righteousness but what is of my creation can present you unblameable and unproveable in my sight. This is the immutable decree of Jehovah. He that cannot change in himself, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth, has determined that the righteousness by which we are accounted just before him is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God. It is a righteousness which comes from heaven, and does not grow out of this earth. It is the free-gift of God, and not attained by the work of man. It is a righteousness of God's own creation, an infinitely perfect and unspotted righteousness. When a man is able to create a planetary system, then he may create such a righteousness for himself. If the one would be the height of presumption and blasphemy, so is the other. That man never saw the corruption and plague of his own heart, who dreams of working out for himself a righteousness, in which he may appear faultless at the bar of justice. Sin and pride have so blinded his eyes, that he knows not himself. He sees not how corrupt his nature, nor how corrupt his life is, nor yet how corrupt his very best duties are. He is also ignorant of the perfect nature of God's law, which is as holy as God is holy, and which will not receive sincere for uninterrupted obedience, but cuts off all claim

to

to legal righteousness for one single offence, even in thought; and he is not acquainted with the gospel method of salvation, which discovers to us, how sinners corrupt in nature and life, and under condemnation, may be pardoned and justified by the righteousness of the God-man Jesus Christ, imputed unto them by faith. If scripture authority could convince, and scripture images could explain this important doctrine, one might hope the text would leave no doubt in any serious mind.

I shall endeavour to remove the common difficulties concerning the doctrine under my *second* general head, wherein I proposed to make some practical remarks upon the words of the text: but the time will not permit me to enlarge upon them at present. And therefore leaving them for the subject of another discourse, I would only observe how beautifully these great truths of the gospel are illustrated in the text.

First we read that the righteousness of Christ is an heavenly gift — Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. And then the sinner has only to receive it as a free gift, he has no merit in bringing it down — Let the earth open and receive the heavenly gift. And when this righteousness is received by faith, then it brings the sinner into a state of salvation,

tion—and let them bring forth salvation. And when he is placed in this state, then he will bring forth the fruits of the spirit in all goodness, and righteousness and truth—and let righteousness spring up together. I the Lord have created it to justify the unrighteous, that being made free from sin, and become servants to God; they might have their fruit into holiness, and the end everlasting life.

I shall endeavour to remove the common difficulties concerning the doctrine under my second general head, wherein I proposed to make some practical remarks upon the words of the text: but the time will not permit me to enlarge upon them at present. And therefore leaving them for the subject of another discourse, I would only observe how beautifully these great truths of the gospel are illustrated in the text:—

First we read that the righteousness of **Heaven** is a heavenly gift—Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. And then the inner man has only to receive it as a free gift, he has no merit in bringing it down—I see the earth open and receive the heavenly gift. And when this righteousness is received by faith, then it brings the inner into a state of salvation.



ISAIAH xlv. 8.

*Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righte-
ousness; let the earth open, and let
them bring forth salvation, and let
righteousness spring up together. I
the Lord have created it.*

IN a former discourse upon these words it was proposed to consider; *First*, Their true sense and meaning; and *Secondly*, To make some practical remarks upon them. Having gone through the first particular, and established the doctrine, I come now to reduce it to practice, and this I shall do by making some remarks upon the words in the order they lay in the text.

The first remark, that would occur to an attentive reader, is the state of man before righteousness is poured down upon him from on high. He is like the dry ground, which for want of rain is desolate and barren. So is man in a state of nature destitute of the
D heavenly

heavenly influence of Christ's righteousness, he has no good thing springing up in him. Before he is made righteous, he is altogether unrighteous. Being unjust, he is an object of divine justice. The law of God looks upon him as a transgressor, and considers him in a state of condemnation. The sovereign judge regards him as a child of his wrath, and has past the just decree, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

This is the condition of all men by nature, they are unrighteous, and condemned for their unrighteousness; and they are also helpless and without strength to attain any righteousness for themselves. And yet there is in their fallen nature a cursed pride, which never brake out with greater violence than at present, and which will not submit to the righteousness of God. That we have no righteousness in ourselves, and can attain none by any power or working of our own is the plain doctrine of God's word, is the very fundamental article of our established church, and is evident from daily and melancholy experience, and it is the first practical truth in christianity: for until we be deeply convinced of our sinfulness and helplessness, we shall see no reason to apply to Christ for his righteousness. Men must find themselves sick before they will send for the physician. Our want of righteousness is the cause of all our spiritual

tual sicknesses and maladies, and the scripture speaks plainly of our want of righteousness. " We have before proved, says the apostle, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that they are all under sin, as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one." So says our ninth article: " By original sin man is very far gone from original righteousness, and by it every person born into the world deserveth God's wrath and damnation." And concerning our helplessness in this state our reformers in the second part of the homily *On the misery of man*, speak the sense of scripture in these words:

" Thus we have heard, how evil we be of ourselves, how of ourselves, and by our ourselves, we have no goodness, help or salvation, but contrariwise sin, damnation, and death everlasting: which if we deeply weigh and consider, we shall the better understand the great mercy of God, and how our salvation cometh only by Christ: for in ourselves (as of ourselves) we find nothing whereby we may be delivered from this miserable captivity, into the which we are cast, through the envy of the devil by breaking of God's commandment in our first parent *Adam*. We are all become unclean, but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God's wrath, but we are not able to make

D 2

" our-

" ourselves the children and inheritors of
 " God's glory. We are sheep that run a-
 " stray, but we cannot of our own power
 " come again to the sheep-fold: so great is
 " our imperfection and weakness. In our-
 " selves therefore may we not glory, which
 " of ourselves are nothing but sinful; neither
 " may we rejoice in any works that we do,
 " all which be so imperfect and impure that
 " they are not able to stand before the righ-
 " teous judgment-seat of God, as the holy
 " prophet *David* saith, Enter not into judg-
 " ment with thy servant O Lord, for no
 " man that liveth shall be found righteous in
 " thy sight. To God therefore must we flee,
 " or else shall we never find peace, rest, and
 " quietness of conscience in our hearts."

Thus far our reformers. To the truth
 of their words we have all set our hands,
 and may God set our hearts to act agreeably
 to our subscriptions. Though they were
 our own act and deed, yet it is a matter of
 fact, which cannot be concealed, nor too
 much lamented, that many persons act di-
 rectly contrary to their most solemn engage-
 ments: For how seldom do we hear any
 thing from the pulpit about original sin,
 or about there being none righteous, no not
 one. Instead of this antiquated doctrine,
 what is more common than to hear decla-
 mations upon the sufficiency of human rea-
 son in matters of religion, upon the dignity

of

of human nature and upon moral rectitude? And is it not the general scope of young preaching to recommend practical duties, as necessary terms and conditions of our justification before God? Is this the case, my brethren, or is it not? Certainly you know it is. Have you not heard reason extolled as a sufficient guide in matters of religion, contrary to the express word of God, which declares that the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, nor while he continues a natural man can he know them, let him pretend to reason ever so much about them? Have you not heard men lavish in the praises of the dignity of human nature, which if God's account of human nature be true, is an unrighteous dignity? What is a more common topic, than to cry up moral rectitude, which if scripture be true is an unrighteous rectitude, and to recommend practical duties as terms of justification, which is setting them up in the place of of Christ's righteousness, and teaching men an unrighteous obedience? Upon whatever footing this be done, it is an unrighteous attempt; whether it be upon the principles of natural religion or morality, or any other fashionable system, it is equally unrighteous, because it is going about to establish a righteousness of man's own, and not submitting to the righteousness of God, and whoever does this, neither knows his own want of right.

righteousness, or his inability to attain any by human means, nor does he know that there is no righteousness to be had, but what must come down from heaven, but what the heavens must drop down from above, and the skies must pour out, the application of which truth is my second remark.

The text clearly teaches us, that righteousness comes from above, as the rain does. It does not spring or grow out of the earth, for there is none upon earth righteous, no not one; but God sends it down from heaven. In like manner as the dry parched ground has not the rain in itself, but receives it from the fruitful influence of the heavens, so the barren wilderness of man's heart has no righteousness, until the Holy Spirit bring it from above: For it is his office to convince the sinner of his unrighteousness, and then to convince him of righteousness, by giving him faith to apply to himself that divine righteousness, which Christ wrought out for his justification and salvation.

If any member of our church thinks this doctrine wanting in point of evidence, let him consult the articles and homilies; words cannot be plainer, than those are in the beginning of the sermon on the salvation of mankind by only Christ our Saviour, from sin and death everlasting. "Because all
"men be sinners, and offenders against God,
"and breakers of his law, and command-

"ments,

"ments, therefore can no man by his own
 "acts, works and deeds (seem they never
 "so good) be justified, and made righteous
 "before God: But every man of necessity
 "is constrained to seek for another right-
 "eousness of justification, to be received at
 "God's own hands, that is to say, the for-
 "giveness of his sins and trespasses, in such
 "things as he hath offended. And this
 "justification or righteousness, which we
 "so receive of God's mercy and Christ's
 "merits, embraced by faith, is taken, ac-
 "cepted, and allowed of God for our per-
 "fect and full justification: For (as it fol-
 "lows in the latter part of the same homily)
 "all the good works that we can do be im-
 "perfect, and therefore not able to deserve
 "our justification; but our justification doth
 "come freely by the mere mercy of God;
 "and of so great and free mercy, that
 "whereas all the world was not able of
 "themselves to pay any part towards their
 "ransom, it pleased our heavenly father of
 "his infinite mercy, without any our desert
 "or deserving, to prepare for us the most
 "precious jewels of Christ's body and blood,
 "whereby our ransom might be fully paid,
 "the law fulfilled, and his justice fully sa-
 "tisfied. So that Christ is now the right-
 "eousness of all them that truly do believe
 "in him."

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This is the doctrine of our reformers, and, if any person refuse to abide by their authority, let him consult the oracles of truth, where he may read that the righteousness by which we are justified is, not man's, but God's — and that Christ the Godman is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth — and if he still refuse to make mention of his righteousness, even his only, the Holy Spirit refers him to the fair volume of nature for further evidence. He teaches us that fallen man without the righteousness of Christ is like the earth without rain. Look then upon the face of the earth, after there has been no rain for two or three summer months, and see with your own eyes the necessity of having righteousness rained down from heaven. You see the earth hath lost its verdure. The more tender vegetables are quite dead. The more robust hang their heads and droop. This is the true picture of the natural man destitute of Christ's righteousness. No grace can grow, no virtue can flourish in him. His heart is a parched up wilderness, in which nothing good can spring, until Christ's righteousness be rained upon it. If the fact be true in nature, this doctrine must be equally true in grace. If nothing can grow without the rain and dew of heaven, then nothing can grow without the righteousness of Christ: for he who cannot deceive uses this illustration

tion to teach us the necessity of Christ's righteousness. Ye heavens, drop down the dew, says he, and let the skies pour out righteousness. Its original is from heaven, and it comes to us from thence to overthrow the pride of natural religion, and morality, and whatever ascribes to fallen man the will and the power of making himself righteous before God. That which makes us righteous is not in any faculty of nature, but is entirely the free gift of grace. And it is owing to mens vain glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted in all mankind; that men know not themselves, and will not look up to heaven for that righteousness which they want. Hence it is, that we hear so much about natural and moral religion, which pay their court to the pride of our fallen nature, and hence comes that execrable position upon which they are built, *viz.* "That man has in himself the rule of right and obligations to follow it." Is not this insulting God to his face? He says, that all men are gone out of the right way, the moralist gives him the lye, and says, No, I have still in myself the rule of right. What rule of right has he in himself, whom God has pronounced unrighteous and abominable altogether? Has the unrighteous man the rule of righteousness in himself? What sort of a rule is it by which an unrighteous man walks? And

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what obligations has he in himself to follow the rule of right, of whom, God says, there is none that doeth good, no not one? Can he have at the same time in himself obligations to follow the rule of right, the thoughts of the imaginations of whose heart are only evil continually? It is impossible. Until Christ's righteousness be poured down upon him from heaven, he is blind and dark in the things of God, he has no rule of right, and he has obligations, and strong ones to follow the rule of wrong, but none to follow what is right. This is God's account of fallen man. How different is it from the flattering view in which our moral teachers love to paint and dress the fancied dignity of their nature. Pride, ignorant of itself, makes them believe that they are still great and noble beings; and they cannot bear the just character, which our church has drawn of them in the conclusion of the homily on the misery of man. "Hitherto we have
 "heard, what we are of ourselves, very sin-
 "ful, wretched and damnable. Again, we
 "have heard, how that, of ourselves, and
 "by ourselves we are not able either to
 "think a good thought, or work a good
 "deed, so that we can find in ourselves no
 "hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever
 "maketh unto our destruction." We must
 have this humbling view of ourselves, if
 ever we see reason to seek righteousness from
 heaven

heaven. May God humble us all, and convince us deeply of our want of righteousness, that we may apply to him for it.—Knowing where it may be had we shall apply for it properly, which leads me to consider

3^{dly}, How it is to be attained.

The place of its growth may point out unto us the true method of attaining it. It is of heavenly extraction. You cannot ascend to heaven to bring it down. But may not your prayers and good works ascend to merit it? No, they cannot. Until Christ's righteousness be imputed to you by faith, your prayers are an abomination, and your fancied good works are nothing but sin. So says the scripture, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." So says our church in her articles, "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God, neither do they make men meet to receive grace.—Yea rather, for that they are not done, as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." We doubt not but the best of them are only so many splendid sins. They may adorn a man's outward conversation, may gain him the honour of men, but in the eyes of God they are of no price: because they flow from an unregenerate heart. So that works done before we receive Christ's righteousness can do nothing towards meriting it, and works done

after receiving it can add nothing to it. It is a free gift, therefore works done before cannot merit it. It waits for no qualification, no condition in the receiver, because it is given to the most unworthy, and is given to supply the want of all qualifications and conditions — it is given to the unrighteous and to the ungodly. And it wants no works done after receiving to add to it, because it is infinitely perfect. It is the righteousness of God, and will prove itself to be from God by its fruits, which fruits evidence us to be righteous, but do not make us so: for if they were to make us righteous, but in part, that would be going about to establish our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God.

This is the doctrine of scripture. After the apostle had established it by various proofs, he thus sums them all up — Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. Our church has made the same conclusion in her 11th article, where she teaches, “ That we are accounted
 “ righteous before God only for the merit of
 “ our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith,
 “ and not for our own works or deservings.
 “ Wherefore that we are justified by faith
 “ only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and
 “ very full of comfort, as more largely is
 “ expressed in the homily of justification.”
 In which homily we have these words:
 “ Justifi-

" Justification is not the office of man, but
 " of God: for man cannot make himself
 " righteous by his own works, neither in
 " part nor in the whole, for that were the
 " greatest arrogancy and presumption of man,
 " that antichrist could set up against God, to
 " affirm, that a man might by his own works
 " take away and purge his own sins, and so
 " justify himself. But justification is the of-
 " fice of God only, and is not a thing which
 " we render unto him, but which we receive
 " of him: not which we give to him, but
 " which we take of him by his free mercy,
 " and by the only merits of his most dearly
 " beloved son, our only redeemer, saviour,
 " and justifier, Jesus Christ."

In the following part of the same homily are these words:

" The very true meaning of this proposition
 " or saying, We be justified by faith in Christ
 " only, is this, We put our faith in Christ,
 " that we be justified by him only, that we
 " be justified by God's free mercy, and the
 " merits of our Saviour Christ only, and by
 " no virtue or good works of our own, that
 " is in us, or that we can be able to have,
 " or to do, for to deserve the same: Christ
 " himself only being the cause meritorious
 " thereof."

If then all working and boasting be thus
 excluded, both by scripture and by the au-
 thority of our own church, how is this righ-
 teousness

teousness to be attained? The prophet teaches us in the text. We receive it as the thirsty ground does the rain. Can we do any thing towards bringing down the gentle dew, or the fruitful rain of heaven? When the earth is parched and burnt up, can we command the clouds above to descend and saturate the thirsty soil? No. We are not equal to these things: any more, than we can bring down the righteousness of Christ when we please. It is God's to give, ours to receive, as the dry ground does the rain. When God pours down from on high abundance of righteousness, what can we do but receive it, as a free gift, and be thankful? This is the main point, and much stress should be laid upon it. We all want righteousness alike, being all alike sinners, Christ has infinite and perfect righteousness to give, and when we desire it, we should be sure to seek it in the way wherein God has appointed to bestow it. Now he always bestows it freely — not upon those who merit it, for then it would not be free — Merit and free grace are opposites, but he bestows it upon the unrighteous and ungodly. He bestows it upon them who want it most, and who are sensible they can do the least to attain it. If then you desire righteousness, go as unrighteous and ungodly to the Lord Jesus, and he will cloath you with his all-perfect righteousness. He requires no qualification, but to acknowledge, that you have none.

If

If you are sensible of your wants, that is a prevailing motive enough with him to supply them. To find that you want righteousness, is the proper way and means to attain it — Hear what your God promises you —

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” —

Ye shall be filled with it, because ye hunger and thirst after it, not because ye deserve it, and have merited it by your good works, but because you are made sensible that you cannot deserve or merit it. This is the established method of God’s acting —

“For he filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich pharisee he sendeth empty away” —

He filleth them who hunger and thirst after righteousness with the good things of grace, and with the best things of glory — but he sendeth him, who says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, such a proud pharisee he sendeth empty away.

It is exceedingly difficult to convince men, that this is the gospel method of salvation. Their pride will not submit to it — no not to be saved — by the righteousness of God — they will try, even after they are convinced of the necessity of God’s righteousness, to add something of their own to it. Their fond conceit of themselves wont let them see, how entirely their nature is corrupted, and how corrupt their best works are. Vicious self-love raises a thousand objections against free justification through

through Christ's righteousness: but there has been one made by men of corrupt minds in every age, and which they are still making, though God himself has vouchsafed to give it an answer. They object to this scripture doctrine, That it makes void the law, and renders an holy life needless. To which calumny God answers in the text. When he sends down a shower of righteousness from above, he says, let the earth open, and receive the heavenly blessing. But to what end? That it may continue as barren and unfruitful as before? No, but that such effects may follow in the spiritual world, as always do in the natural, when reviving showers descend upon the dry thirsty ground. Do not they always make the earth fruitful? So does the righteousness of Christ, as I proposed to shew under my *fourth* and last remark, which was to prove what are the constant fruits of it.

"I Jehovah have created it," says God in the text. The righteousness of God is a new creation. And why are we created anew in Christ Jesus? That we may live still to the flesh, and its corrupt appetites? No: for then we should be created anew in the devil, and not in Christ Jesus: but we are created anew unto good works. The righteousness of Christ is to deliver us from our sinful nature, and not to encourage us to live in it: for this is the will of God, even our sanctification. He gives us righteousness from heaven, that

it

it may raise us up to heaven: for as it comes from God, it will carry us up to God. It will not remain in us as a dead and barren principle, but will make us fruitful in good works, even that we may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God the Father. This is the scripture account of the doctrine, and it is also the doctrine of our church. We read in the first part of the homily upon faith, "That as the light cannot be hid, but will shew forth itself at one place or another: so a true faith cannot be kept secret, but when occasion is offered, it will break out, and shew itself by good works. And as the living body of a man ever exerciseth such things as belong to a natural and living body, for nourishment and preservation of the same, as it hath need, opportunity, and occasion, even so the soul, that hath a lively faith in it, will be doing always some good work, which shall declare that it is living, and will not be unoccupied. Therefore when men hear in the scripture so high commendations of faith, that it maketh us to please God, to live with God, and to be the children of God: if then they fancy, that they be set at liberty from doing all good works, and may live as they list, they trifle with God, and deceive themselves. And it is a manifest token, that

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" they

“ they be far from having the true and lively
 “ faith, and also far from knowledge what
 “ true faith meaneth.”

These are the words of our reformers — They speak of the true justifying faith agreeably to the sense of scripture, describing it to be an active operative grace, producing all the fair and ripe fruits of an holy life — These flow as constantly from it, as light does from the sun. If any man says he hath this faith, and does not make it manifest by these fruits, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him. His faith is dead. It is no better than what the devils have, and unless it please God to open his eyes and to undeceive him, he will soon have his portion amongst them, who believe and tremble.

I have now finished the practical remarks, which the text offered to our consideration, and I hope, my brethren, they have appeared to you with convincing evidence. The present and the eternal welfare of your own souls, as well as of theirs which are committed to your care, require you to meditate seriously upon this fundamental doctrine of christianity. Our whole religion stands upon this great truth, that the righteousness for which we sinners are accepted as righteous at the bar of justice is not our own, but Christ's — wholly wrought out for us by his obedience and sufferings, and received of us by faith without any of our works or deservings. *St. Paul*
 has

has written two epistles in defence of this doctrine. If any man can read them without being convinced of the truth of it, he is out of the reach of argument. When the church of *Rome* denied the truth of it, and was fallen into the damnable doctrine of works being meritorious towards our justification, which is the ground-work of all their gross heresies and superstitions, it pleased God to raise up the reformers, who laboured chiefly to overthrow this fundamental error, and he blest their labours with success. By their means the knowledge of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ was spread abroad, and reached unto this land. Our church was happily reformed, as from all the errors of popery, so from the doctrine of the merit of works in particular. Long it stood upon the principles of the reformation, and these principles, glory be to God's good providence, are still in our articles, and homilies, and liturgy. But where else shall we find them? Who maintains them? Who writes, who preaches in their defence? Alas, they who should be their friends, betray them: for is there a more general received opinion than that good works are the terms of our acceptance with God? Is not natural religion founded upon this opinion? And so far as men build upon it, they depart from the great doctrine of the reformation, and return back to popery. Is this our religious situa-

tion, or is it not? Let matter of fact speak. Are the celebrated books, in which youth are now lectured, written in the protestant spirit against the merit of works, and tending to establish the righteousness of Christ? Is this also the general scope of our preaching? Is it our righteousness, or God's that we seek to establish? Let experience answer. And it answers loud enough — We hear man's righteousness echoed from the pulpit and from the press — and in this protestant church — in this sound and best constituted church upon earth, too many of her sons have learnt to reject the fundamental doctrine, upon which she was established. When we are thus departing and falling away from our first principles, it seemed to me necessary to call upon you, as christian men to embrace, and as members of our church, to defend them. Whoever amongst us seeks justification through Christ's righteousness, cannot be offended at what I have said — and I would offend those, who seek for justification without Christ's righteousness. I would gladly stir them up and provoke them to examine their principles, and to try whether they can trust their eternity upon them. If they trust to their own righteousness, they are lost for ever. If there be truth in God — if there be any reliance upon his word, there is no righteousness but Christ's, wherein sinners can appear without spot of sin at the bar

bar of justice. This is the only cloathing, which can hide all their original and actual pollution. Trust to it, and God the Father will see you perfect in beauty, through the comeliness which Christ will put upon you. Reject it, and think of appearing before him with the least stain of sin, he is of purer eyes than to behold you. The least stain makes you unrighteous, and it is decreed, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Oh that his good Spirit may practically convince every one who hears me this day, of his want of some better righteousness than his own, and may he enable us to wait upon the Lord our righteousness, until the text be fulfilled in us — May he command the heavens from above to drop down, and the skies to pour forth righteousness — and may he command the earth, even our earthly sensual hearts, to open and to receive it, that salvation and righteousness may spring up together, with all their fair and ripe fruits. Grant this blessed God and Father to this whole congregation, through the all-perfect righteousness of thy Son Jesus Christ, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts, turning us from sin to righteousness, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be glorified in us, and by us, in time and in eternity. *Amen and Amen.*

F I N I S.

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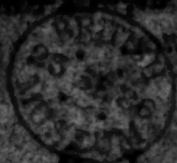
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